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FIVE CASES

Summon Rehana thru gazette

Court issues order

COURT CORRESPONDENT

A Dhaka court yesterday directed the government to issue five gazette notifications summoning 25 individuals, including Sheikh Rehana, sister of the ousted prime minister Sheikh Hasina, to appear before it on July 20 in five cases over alleged irregularities in plot allocation under the Purbachal New Town project.

Judge Md Zakir Hossain Galib of the Dhaka Metropolitan Senior Special Judge's Court gave the order after police submitted reports on previously issued arrest warrants, said court sources.

The list of accused also includes Hasina's son Sajeeb

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5



Riverbank erosion along the Meghna in Bhola has intensified due to upstream water pressure and illegal sand extraction, according to locals. Several homes, croplands, and markets have already been lost to the river. In rural Bangladesh, such erosion continues to threaten the lives and livelihoods of communities living near waterbodies. The photo was taken recently.

HOLEY ARTISAN ATTACK

We stand firm in fight against terrorism

Says foreign secy at commemorative event

STAR REPORT

Terming the Holey Artisan Bakery attack a "brutal strike at shared humanity", Foreign Secretary Asad Alam Siam yesterday reiterated Bangladesh's zero-tolerance stance on terrorism.

He also pledged to strengthen cooperation with international partners to combat terrorism.

"We are gathered not only to remember that tragic night, but to reaffirm our unwavering commitment to fighting terrorism in all its forms," he said while paying tributes to the victims of the Holey Artisan attack at a commemorative event.

The event was held at the residence of the Italian Ambassador to Bangladesh Antonio Alessandro in the capital's Gulshan to honour the victims of the 2016 Holey Artisan attack, marking the ninth anniversary of the country's deadliest terrorist attack that left 22 people dead, including 17



PHOTO: COLLECTED

A minute's silence was observed yesterday at the residence of the Italian ambassador in Gulshan.

foreign nationals.

Siam said the attack was an attempt to sow fear and division within an inclusive society.

He noted that Bangladesh has since taken significant steps to enhance its counterterrorism efforts, including bringing perpetrators to justice through a special tribunal.

"Our security forces responded with courage and clarity. Two police officers gave their lives in the line of duty," the foreign

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50 trees felled at JU without approval



SAKIB AHMED

Nearly 50 trees have been felled on the Jahangirnagar University (JU) campus without prior permission, sparking outrage among students and environmental activists.

The trees were felled on Monday morning using an excavator in front of the Computer Science and Engineering (CSE) building to make way for an extension under the Faculty of Mathematical and Physical Sciences.

The work is part of the university's Tk 1,445 crore "Further Development Project."

However, the action appears to violate earlier commitments made by the JU administration, which assured that no construction involving tree felling would proceed without a visible development of a campus masterplan.

"We didn't give permission to cut these trees. The construction company did this without our approval," said Md Nasir Uddin, director of the Further Development Project.

SEE PAGE 9 COL 4

Kuet shutdown hits 133rd day

DIPANKAR ROY, Khulna

The suspension of academic activities at Khulna University of Engineering and Technology (Kuet) entered its 133rd day today, following violent clashes involving students and teachers on February 18.

In response to the unrest, the Ministry of Education removed then vice-chancellor Prof Muhammad Masud and pro-VC Prof Shariful Alam on April 25, appointing Prof Md Hazrat Ali of Chittagong University of Engineering and Technology as interim VC on May 1.


However, he resigned on May 22, citing pressure and lack of support from the Kuet Teachers' Association.

Since then, both the VC and pro-VC posts have remained vacant, paralysing the university's administrative functions, including salary disbursements, project payments, and academic decisions, as the VC's signature is mandatory for all official transactions.

Despite a directive from the education ministry to resume academic activities from May 4, the teachers' association has boycotted all academic and administrative responsibilities.

Prof Md Faruq Hossain, the association's general secretary, said, "Our previous stance remains unchanged. We've discussed

AT A GLANCE



VC, pro-VC posts remain vacant since May

Teachers continue boycott, demand VC appointment

7,565 students affected, academic activities suspended

First-year classes yet to begin, scheduled since April 24

Over Tk 600cr in dev projects stalled

More than 1,100 staff members unpaid since May

in detail how academic and administrative decisions cannot be made without a VC. In his absence, it is not possible to overcome the ongoing crisis. Therefore, we urge the government to immediately appoint a new VC to resolve the stalemate at Kuet. Until then,

classes will not resume."

The teachers have also reiterated their demand for justice, calling for disciplinary action against some students and "outsiders", who allegedly harassed faculty members during the earlier unrest.

The stalemate has left the academic future of 7,565 students in limbo, with all classes and examinations suspended. Newly enrolled first-year students, scheduled to begin classes on April 24, are yet to commence their academic journey.

"We are lagging behind in studies due to the prolonged shutdown. We prayed to our teachers to resume classes but they did not respond," said Rahatul Islam, a student of the Civil Engineering department.

Meanwhile, administrative and financial functions remain stalled due to the vacant top positions. The paralysis threatens infrastructure projects worth over Tk 600 crore, including a 10-storey academic building, separate 10-storey dormitories for male and female students, a five-storey foreign student and visiting faculty dormitory, residential quarters for staff and faculty, roads, substations, solar systems, green boundary walls, and drainage systems.

Since Ramadan, contractor

SEE PAGE 9 COL 2

MAGURA RAPE, MURDER

HC stays fine on death-row convict

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The High Court yesterday admitted the appeal filed by death-row convict Hitu Sheikh against the lower court verdict in the rape and murder case of an eight-year-old girl in Magura.

The HC also stayed the part of the verdict that fined Hitu Sheikh Tk 1 lakh.

The bench of Justice Md Mostafizur Rahman and Justice Md Sagir Hossain passed the order after a brief hearing.

Hitu's lawyer, Md Abbas Uddin, told The Daily Star that the HC will hold a full hearing on the appeal later.

On May 17, the Women and Children Repression Prevention Tribunal in Magura sentenced the prime accused, Hitu Sheikh, to death for the brutal rape and murder.

His wife, Jaheda Begum, 38, and sons Ratul Sheikh, 18, and Sajib Sheikh, 20, were acquitted as the charges against them could not be proven.

Judge M Zahid Hasan delivered the verdict 70 days after the case was filed on March 8. The trial was completed in 11 working days, according to the prosecution.

Hitu Sheikh, 44, is the father-in-law of the victim's sister, and Sajib is the victim's brother-in-law.

According to case documents, the child went to visit her elder sister's home in the Nijnanduali Mathpara area of Magura Sadar on March 1 this year.

She was raped there in the early hours of March 6. On the same day, she was taken to the Magura 250-bed District Hospital in a critical condition and later transferred to Faridpur Medical College Hospital.

From Faridpur, she was taken to Dhaka Medical College Hospital in an unconscious state on that

SEE PAGE 4 COL 5

Ex-ACC leadership shut down Padma Bridge case

Says incumbent chairman

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

The Anti-Corruption Commission Chairman Mohammad Abdul Momen said the ACC's own leadership during 2014 closed the investigation of the Padma Bridge case without a clear explanation.

According to Momen, it has serious questions about the integrity of the decision.

"This is no longer just about corruption in a mega project. We are now also investigating whether the former ACC leadership intentionally shielded those involved," he said.

The ACC has found preliminary evidence of irregularities in the appointment of consultants for the Padma Bridge project, reviving a corruption case that

had remained dormant for over a decade, according to the chairman.

Speaking to reporters at the ACC headquarters in Dhaka yesterday, Momen said, "The case was closed through sheer force. There was enough evidence at the time, yet the commission chose to walk away."

His comments mark the ACC's strongest criticism to date of its own leadership during 2014, when the commission was headed by chairman M Badiuzzaman and commissioner Mohammed Shahabuddin, who is now serving as the president of Bangladesh.

The original case was filed in 2012, following global scrutiny over alleged corruption tied to

SEE PAGE 4 COL 4



Mango stalls in Chattogram are seeing high footfall as a bumper harvest brings popular varieties like Himsagar, Langra, Amrapali, and Haribhanga to the market. Prices are lower than last year, ranging from Tk 25 to Tk 100 per kg depending on size and variety. The photo was taken in the Kadamtali area of Chattogram recently.

PHOTO: RAJIB RAIHAN

DEATHS AT HOTEL

Murder case filed, one arrested

STAFF CORRESPONDENT

One person was arrested in a murder case filed yesterday over the death of a couple and their son in a hotel in Dhaka's Moghbazar on Sunday morning.

The arrested is Rafiqul Islam, a distant uncle of Monir Hossain, one of the victims, said Golam Faruk, officer-in-charge of Ramna Police Station.

Rafiqul was the caretaker of the victims' house in Keraniganj.

Meanwhile, a Dhaka court granted a two-day remand for him when he was produced before it with a seven-day remand prayer, court sources said.

Police had detained him for questioning shortly after the incident as he was the one who brought the food from the nearby restaurant on the evening before their death.

The OC said they will interrogate him thoroughly during remand.

Nurul Amin Manik, brother of one

SEE PAGE 9 COL 5